

FACE

Merry Christmas

E-BULLETIN

FORUM FOR ACCESS AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

This is the December 2009 eBulletin from FACE (the Forum for Access and Continuing Education), offered to practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and others with an interest in access, widening participation and lifelong learning. The eBulletin is sent to colleagues in the sector, members and non-members alike. If you would prefer not to receive it, please contact James.Tate@uwe.ac.uk and your details will be removed from the circulation list.

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Next Year's Conference - FACE 2010

The title of the 2010 conference will be

"Which Way Now To Widen Participation: Lifelong Learning, Economy and Society"



Dates - 30th June to 2nd July 2010

Hosts - Southampton Solent University



More details on this conference to follow in this eBulletin in the New Year.



SPEAKERS' CORNER

As a member-oriented organisation FACE would like to invite individual colleagues to have their say on any issue of concern in UK education policy and practice. This is a purely personal point of view and should not be thought to represent any institution, organisation, or official body. To have your say, email Jim at James.Tate@uwe.ac.uk

This month's contribution is from Steve Furness on the question how should we understand the meaning of the term "potential" in widening participation?

Potential to Achieve? Potential to Succeed? Potential to Benefit?

What are we actually looking for when identifying the 'right' students for Aimhigher / widening participation activities?

In last month's "Speakers' Corner" Liz Garton wrote about how important 'self-esteem, aspirations, expectations and study and planning skills for learner success' are when thinking about a learner's progression, as opposed to a government (and HEI?) focus on attainment.

So, looking at this from a slightly different angle, what would the indicators be which could signal to us that a school student might have the 'potential to benefit from higher education' - to quote HEFCE's targeting guidance for Aimhigher? Is this an earlier years version of what 'Higher Ambitions' (2009) talks about when BIS flags up the importance of universities looking at an applicant's 'aptitude and potential to succeed'?

Aimhigher works with schools to spot those students, often as young as 11 or 12, from 'disadvantaged backgrounds' who'll join the 'Aimhigher cohort'. So what exactly are we all looking for? Teachers often end up focusing on 'potential to achieve' and pick a mix of students who are either on track for five or more A* to C GCSEs or may be borderline C/D, who, with an extra boost, could get the grades.

But what about those bright school students who might still not be seen as ones who could benefit from HE? Are we only talking about progression to HE at age 18, for example? Recognising differing rates of development, recognising family and economic circumstances, what about 'potential to benefit from HE' as a young adult? Such students' motivation and development could gain momentum from involvement with Aimhigher.

And are teachers thinking about HE as it now is, with part-time and vocational routes open to choose from, or are they only thinking about 'potential to benefit' from traditional three year full time degree courses?

With 'negative' behaviour sometimes signalling a bright (but frustrated) learner; with many able youngsters in the care system having had a disrupted education; with the talents of many students with learning differences not being revealed, are these sorts of learner particularly at risk of not being seen as having the 'potential to benefit' – of not being included?

So, maybe we need to try to better articulate what we mean by this phrase 'potential to benefit'. Comments in the south west, from teachers, from staff working with youngsters in care and with SEN students and from Aimhigher, would suggest this is needed.

I would very much like to hear from colleagues who have done some work on this. What indicators could we articulate to help ourselves and teachers be as inclusive (as well as realistic) as we can be in choosing who's going to get the undoubted benefits from widening participation activities?

Steve Furness
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Some Other Events

2nd UK National Transition Conference

7 May 2010 University College London

Call for Papers

Central Theme: To explore students' transition to Higher Education in the UK, with a focus on identifying strategies for engaging specific cohorts of under-represented learners in the context of different kinds of institutions.

This conference invites investigation into the quality of student engagement in the first year, with particular focus on student cohorts from under-represented backgrounds in higher education. A main aim is to promote rigorous research into the transition from school/college/work to university whilst developing models of good practice.

Suggested topics: Peer Mentoring, Peer Assisted Learning, Induction, E-learning, Academic Skills, E-induction, Workshops/Resource Development, Widening Participation and Transition Teaching and Learning to support Transition Pre-enrolment support and engagement.

Go to <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/transition/transitionconference> for information on registration and submitting a paper.

**Summer Schools Conference 2010
Friday 19th March 2010**

**The Lakeside Conference Centre,
Aston University, Birmingham**

Focusing on the issues around any financing and sustainability of summer schools beyond 2010, this will be a strategically-oriented event, and so will be of particular interest to Aimhigher leads and senior managers in HEIs. Presentations will include items on funding and the future, progress with the UCAS electronic applications pilot and the latest research on summer school data. There will be no workshops at this event

Speakers include: Professor John Storan, Action on Access, Dr John Selby, HEFCE, Jenny Allen, HEFCE, Mark Corver/Seth Fleet, HEFCE.

For details and booking contact info@actiononaccess.org or 01695 650871

What else is in the News?

For the latest UK Education headlines and stories go to the FACE News Feeds page where you'll find the online news feeds of several of the sources listed below gathered together on one page for easy access.

The Guardian <http://education.guardian.co.uk>

The Independent <http://news.independent.co.uk/education>

The BBC http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/default.stm

The Times http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education

The Times Higher Education <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk>

DCSF News Centre <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/newslist.cgi>

LSC News <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/News>

*If you wish to respond to anything in this eBulletin or contribute to the January 2010 issue, please email Jim at **James.Tate@uwe.ac.uk***